

Cuban Refugee Activists in Disarray

It Has Been All Downhill Politically
And Even Personally for Miami
Exiles Since That Day in 1962

By Richard Harwood

Washington Post Staff Writer

MIAMI—The heat and the special brilliance of the sunlight matched the mood of the huge crowd of Cuban exiles in the Orange Bowl on Dec. 29, 1962.

The cadenced roar from 40,000 throats was like a heavy surf beating in the great stadium:

"Guerra (war)! Guerra! Guerra!"

They were caught up in an emotional frenzy touched off by President John F. Kennedy, who had, a moment earlier, received the only thing of value the survivors of the Bay of Pigs invasion attempt had to give—the flag of Brigade 2506.

Deeply moved, the President declared: "I can assure you that this flag will be returned to this brigade in a free Havana!"

To the Cubans, that impulsive promise was a liberation pledge. It gave birth to extravagant hopes. But those hopes, the brigade's biographer, Haynes Johnson, has written, began to die when Mr. Kennedy died. The process was accelerated by America's preoccupation with Vietnam. Today, the hopes have all but vanished, like the Brigade itself. The exile community is splintered, leaderless, disillusioned and impotent.

U.S. as Adversary

THE FEW REMAINING activists for the most part now regard the Government of the United States more as an adversary than as a friend.

✓ Felipe Rivero, who drank scotch with a beer chaser on the beach at the Bay of Pigs, is in jail in Miami awaiting action on charges of plotting "violent acts against Cuba."

✓ Orlando Bosch, head of the Insurrectional Movement for Revolutionary Recovery, is under indictment for attempted piracy of ships in the Cuban trade, attempted gun-running and conspiracy to blow up a Cuban sugar mill.

✓ Jorge Mas, an intellectual bomb-thrower who runs the largest of the extant exile organizations—RECE (Cuban Representation of Exiles)—broods in a windowless back room on West Flagler Street over the hostility of American officialdom.

"They give Castro a sanctuary," he complains bitterly. "But they harass us. They seize our boats and our guns. Their agents (from the Immigration and Naturalization Service) spy on us all the time."

Ramon Donestevsz, a chubby boat builder who dreams of a "sail-in" to Havana to plead for the release of political prisoners, is threatened with a five-year prison sentence if he carries out his plan. Government agents follow him 24 hours a day to frustrate his scheme.

"Why does your government persecute me?" he asks. "We have waited eight years for them to get our prisoners released and they have failed. Are they afraid we will make them ridiculous if we show them how to get the prisoners out?"

A Dismal Roster

THE MORE SUBSTANTIAL figures associated with the Bay of Pigs—many of them military heroes—have dropped out of sight. At least two were committed to mental hospitals. Others have been discredited by time and events.

✓ Manuel Ray, who was to have been the Minister of Sabotage and Internal Affairs if the Castro regime had fallen in 1961, lost face and influence in 1964 when he botched a new invasion scheme. Manuel Artine, civilian leader of the Bay of Pigs contingent, suffered a similar fate. He is now said to be in the restaurant business in Florida.

Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo, a guerrilla warfare theoretician, was captured and jailed in Cuba when he attempted to translate his theories into practice against the Castro government.

✓ Only Ernesto Oliva, second in command of Brigade 2506, retains his old prestige. But he is no longer active in the exile organizations. He has his own dreams of military conquest and they do not involve the United States directly.

An American diplomatic official, surveying the disarray, compares the Cubans now to the Polish exiles in London. "The Poles," he remarked, "have three separate 'governments' in exile. That's the history of all exile movements. They break up into splinter groups like the Cubans, who have no effective leadership and no ability to work together."

Another officer of the Federal bureaucracy who is engaged in what is known as "intelligence work" is equally harsh and equally clinical in his judgments:

Continued